

Message Text

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SUBJ: COTTON PRODUCTION ESTIMATES

REF: (A) STATE 129910, (B) CAIRO 6579, (C) 75 CAIRO 11577

1. REGRET DELAY IN RESPONDING TO REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATION OF COTTON PRODUCTION AND AREA FIGURES CONTAINED REFTEL A. FIGURES CITED REF B WERE OBTAINED FROM TESTIMONY BEFORE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE BY MINAGRICULTURE ABU AL-ATTA AND REPORT BY MINSTATE FOR CABINET AFFAIRS/ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM SHARIF. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, MINISTERS WERE CITING AN ACTUAL AREA PLANTED IN COTTON AND ACTUAL COTTON PRODUCTION FIGURES AS OPPOSED TO ESTIMATES.

2. AFTER EXTENSIVE CROSS CHECKING, WE FIND MOST COMMONLY USED PRODUCTION TOTALS ARE: 1974-75 SEASON --8,812,432 KANTARS AND 1975-76 SEASON -- 7,642,389 KANTARS. INTERESTINGLY, THESE FIGURES ARE LABELLED FINAL ESTIMATES AND NOT ACTUAL PRODUCTION. (NOTE SCARTO IS ROUTINELY INCLUDED IN ALL EGYPTIAN COTTON STATISTICS, ACCORDING TO INDUSTRY SOURCES, AND AMOUNTS TO APPROXIMATELY 200,000 KANTARS PER YEAR.)

3. OUR EFFORTS TO EXPLAIN REMARKABLY LOW TOTALS PRESENTED IN SHARIF'S REPORT WERE UNSUCCESSFUL. WHEN PRESSEED, GOE
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OFFICIALS FELL BACK ON MORE COMMONLY USED ESTIMATES

NOTED ABOVE. AS IN CASE OF AREA OF PRODUCTION (SEE BELOW), IT APPEARS LOWER TOTALS, IF THEY WERE REPORTED CORRECTLY BY PRESS, WERE POSSIBLY MADE PUBLIC IN ERROR. HENCE FOR CONSISTENCY WE SHOULD CONTINUE USE OFFICIAL FINAL ESTIMATES.

4. REGARDING AREA IN PRODUCTION, AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, AREA OF 1,350,201 FEDDANS REPRESENTS GOVERNMENT'S ALLOCATED AREA FOR COTTON FOR 1975 SEASON. ACCORDING TO AVAILABLE INFORMATION, FARMERS HAVE NOT MET ALLOCATIONS IN ANY RECENT YEAR. WHILE AGAIN WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE CONFIRM FIGURE OF 1,058,000 FEDDANS, WHICH WAS IDENTIFIED TO PA AS ACTUAL FINAL PLANTING FIGURE FOR 1976, IT PROBABLY REPRESENTS ONLY A SLIGHT DECREASE FROM AREA ACTUALLY PLANTED IN 1975, AS OPPOSED TO GOVERNMENT ALLOCATION. WE WOULD OF COURSE LIKE TO HAVE SIMILAR DATA ON PLANTING FOR PREVIOUS YEARS, BUT THIS WOULD BE DIFFICULT IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE TO OBTAIN. IN ANY CASE, LOWER FIGURE FOR 1976 AGAIN PROBABLY INADVERTENTLY MADE PUBLIC. AS LONG AS IT RECOGNIZED THERE IS DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOVERNMENT ALLOCATION AND AMOUNT ACTUALLY PLANTED, SUGGEST USE OF GOVERNMENT'S FINAL ACREAGE ESTIMATES RATHER THAN TOTAL RELEASED TO PA.

5. COMMENT: ON BALANCE BELIEVE WE MUST DISREGARD GOE TOTALS WHICH RECENTLY SURFACED IN PA (REF (B)) BECAUSE THEY ARE INCONSISTENT WITH ANY PREVIOUS STATISTICAL INFORMATION AVAILABLE AND BECAUSE WE CANNOT CONFIRM THEM EVEN WITH IDENTIFIED SOURCES. STRONG POSSIBILITY EXISTS, HOWEVER, IN OUR MIND THAT THE LOWER TOTALS ARE INDEED ACCURATE AND THAT SIMILAR ACTUAL TOTALS FOR PREVIOUS YEARS HAVE USUALLY BEEN WITHHELD, FOR WHATEVER REASON.
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